

NSC BRIEF

2 November 55

ISRAEL'S NEW GOVERNMENT

I. David Ben Gurion's return as Prime Minister and Defense Minister makes certain that Tel Aviv will pursue at this critical moment an unrelentingly tough border policy coupled with shrewd diplomatic maneuvering.

A. Ben Gurion at 69 has apparently recovered from mild cerebral hemorrhage of a month back.

B. Ben Gurion who's espousal of firm retaliation on Israel's frontier has cabled him an "activist" is also Israel's ablest diplomat and most experienced negotiator.

C. His first public pronouncements on resuming control, a tough warning that Israel will continue to defend itself and an invitation to Nasser and the Arabs to meet at the conference table--which they will automatically reject-- indicates in a sense what

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- his approach will be.
- II. His five party coalition cabinet which may be characterized as slightly left of center controls 75 out of 120 seats in parliament. This is adequate particularly in the present mood in Israel which is emphasizing readiness for war and a closing of ranks. Ben Gurion's decisions in terms of the war crisis will receive practically universal support.
- II. The two leftist labor parties in his coalition, MAPAM and Ahdut Haavoda are outspoken in opposing military alliances with the West and Ahdut Haavoda is especially interested in a militant border policy. Should frontier tensions lessen, Ben Gurion will be likely to have trouble with these members of his government.
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NOTE: Distribution of seats among five coalition members as follows:

40 Seats MAPAI-slightly left of center, party in control government.

9 seats MAPAM-Labor party-leftist

10 seats Achdut Haovada-Labor party-leftist

11 seat Hapoel-moderate religious party slightly right

5 seat Progressives-Center party, liberal independents.

In opposition most important are Herut, the activist rightists with 15 seats and General Zionists slightly rightists, characterized as businessmen's party with 13 seats.